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CAG's 1st probe salvo: Contractor was paid twice for the same job

Central And Delhi Govt Agencies Part Of Games Lootfest

Josy Joseph | TNN

New Delhi: V K Shunglu, former Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) who heads the investigation into the Commonwealth "scam", will have to hit the ground running, with evidence pouring in of irregularities in expenditure of public money.

In a clear case of nexus between government agencies and contractors engaged for Games-related projects, a preliminary probe by CAG has established that the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) paid a contractor twice for the same job at Talkatora swimming pool complex.

The first payment was made as part of the main contract worth Rs 200 crore. That should have been sufficient. But CPWD went on to show rare generosity to the contractor, Ahluwalia Constructions, handing them an additional contract for a job already covered by the main contract. In short, the contractor got paid twice for the same job.

The alleged swindle confirms what has always been suspected: that the Games "lootfest" was not limited to the Organizing Committee headed by Suresh Kalmadi. Central and Delhi government agencies entrusted with Games work also participated in it. The CAG's first set of "Preliminary Audit Memoes" on projects linked to the Games have put the spotlight on the CPWD, which works under the Union urban development ministry.

► CAG to focus on big projects, P 4



ALL TOGETHER NOW: Sonia and Rahul with medal winners on Saturday

Now, Sonia snubs Kalmadi

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Congress chief Sonia Gandhi on Saturday kept Suresh Kalmadi out of her meeting with Indian Commonwealth Games medal winners, in what appeared to be confirmation that the Organizing Committee's controversial chairman has become persona non grata with the ruling dispensation.

Coming just a day after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh failed to invite the OC chief to his interaction with successful athletes, Kalmadi's omission from Sonia's list of invitees will be seen as a public rebuke. It will also be taken as a sign that the OC boss can expect little leeway from the investigating agencies.

► Seek probe under COI Act, P 4

Corruption seems with OC: Sheila

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi chief minister Sheila Dikshit has said the "real corruption" in the Games seemed to be with regard to the Rs 1600 crore given as central loans to the Organizing Committee headed by Suresh Kalmadi.

In an interaction with PTI on Saturday, Dikshit virtually turned the spotlight on Kalmadi. She said "at the moment, the suspicion is very much on the OC." Nothing that infrastructure development was the government's job, she said the Centre had given "a number of loans (to the OC) and that is where the real corruption is. There may have also been (corruption) in some government departments. I'm not ruling that out." Referring to the investigation ordered by the PM, she said, "I think only this committee (headed by former CAG V K Shunglu) ... will be able to clear the cobwebs."

► Rahman says sorry, P 6

Ayodhya case: Stage set for Round 2 in SC

Manjari Mishra | TNN

Lucknow: Efforts to get an out of court settlement of the Ayodhya dispute took a severe knock on Saturday with the Nimrohi Akhara, a key party in the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi title suit, announcing it would challenge the Allahabad High Court's verdict in the Supreme Court. Akhara chief Mahant Bhaskar Das' change of heart came around the same time that the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) decided to appeal against the ruling to divide the disputed site into three parts — between the Akhara, Ram Lalla and the Sunni Waqf board.

Akhara counsel Ranjit Lal Verma said he would question the verdict, which held their suit to be time-barred. "The judgment gives us possession of Ram Chabutra and Sita Raso but the central dome has been awarded to others (Ram Lalla Virajman and his friends). Akhara wants the management rights of the temple and the entire inner courtyard in its possession," he said.

YH Muchala, convener of the AIMPLB's legal cell, said there were a number of anomalies in the judgment. "Therefore, the executive committee considers it to be the right obligation of Indian Muslims to challenge the judgment to remove distortions introduced by it in the basic values of the constitution and the established norms of jurisprudence 51-member committee 1 Lucknow on Saturday.

The AIMPLB wants a decision that is in consonance with the tenets of the Constitution and Shariat. "Favouring of faith over rule of law amounts to subjugating minority interest in the process," Muchala said.

► 'Expel Katiyar', P 13



R L Verma, a member of the Nimrohi Akhara

We are only claiming our property back. A mosque cannot be gifted, shifted and sold. S Q Jilvasi, spokesman of the AIMPLB



S Q Jilvasi, spokesman of the AIMPLB

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Soon, officials realised Kalmadi was tuned out of the routine scheduled meeting and they quietly made their way out. The message seemed pretty loud and clear even to the politically uninitiated. Sonia's pointed decision to keep Kalmadi at bay when she met the successful athletes could only be read as the Congress brass's stern disapproval of how the Games were almost marred.

Allegations of graft, sheer ineptitude and a certain brazenness about it all have made a deep impression in government and Congress. The mood in PMO is unsparing as Kalmadi and Co. are seen to have bungled on an unprecedented scale even as the role of other agencies like those affiliated to Delhi government and the Centre is also likely to come under the scanner.

Official sources said the



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be meaningful.

It is felt that the probe should focus on critical OC areas like procurement, overlays, appointment of officials and consultants. Delhi government agencies like PWD and central ones like DDA needed to be part of the scrutiny even as the probe could look at just how so much of government money — Rs 1,600 crore to OC alone — could have been allotted to such an inefficient and unaccountable crew.

Graft charges: CAG focus on big projects

Josy Joseph | TNN

New Delhi: The Comptroller and Auditor General's first set of "Preliminary Audit Memos" on Games projects have put the spotlight on the CPWD, which is under the Union urban development ministry. The urban development ministry is headed by S Jaipal Reddy. CPWD carried out construction and related work on behalf of the Sports Authority of India in five stadia — the Talkatora swimming pool complex, Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, National Stadium and the Karni Singh Shooting Range.

According to the "Running Account Payments" system, disbursements are made to contractors based on work progress before the "Final Payment" bill is submitted. CAG has found that CPWD released payments for the same service building in two separate instances. The total project size is about Rs 5 crore. The auditors have also raised questions

regarding tax deductions, which yet again have raised doubts about the integrity of payment releasing methods. CPWD has paid taxes on behalf of the contractors, despite TDS being part of the total contract amount, the memos have pointed out.

It's a indication of the number of irregularities that are emerging that the CAG has raised almost a dozen audit memos — or queries about apparent irregularities — in the Talkatora swimming pool project alone. Hence, the CAG is likely to focus on the larger projects.

These are the first set of audit memos on any games related projects. The only other communication from CAG thus far has been the "Inspection Report" of the accounts of the OC issued in August. According to authoritative sources, the CAG's first formal reports on the Organising Committee, and agencies such as the Delhi government, CPWD and DDA will not be out before December.

'Corruption charges disturbing'

New Delhi: Chief minister Sheila Dikshit on Saturday said the "real corruption" in the Games seemed to be with regard to the Rs 1600 crore given as central loans to the OC.

CM was of the view that OC chief Suresh Kalmadi, who is the target of attack over the mess that was witnessed in run up to the Games, had failed to "win confidence" of people. "We feel relieved and happy (at the successful Games). But what is disturbing is the corruption charges. They are very disturbing."

"The fact that the Prime Minister has taken almost an instantaneous decision to order probe into the whole thing and have the picture ready by January, that I think is very heartening," she said. Dikshit, who answered a range of questions on CWG preparations and the controversies surrounding it, stressed that the allegations of corruption are "not going to be pushed under the carpet". TNN

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